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ABSTRACT

An Indiana district's teacher evaluation plan developed cooperatively by teachers and administrators is described and its implementation outlined. Based on the shared responsibility of teacher and supervisor, the plan is intended to provide a positive approach to stimulating self-growth, instructional effectiveness, and overall improvement in performance. Each teacher confers with a supervisor to formulate from one to three goals for instructional improvement. Data are collected from October 15 to May 15, and evaluation methods include formal and informal observation, student evaluation, and artifact collection. All forms of data are collected yearly for semipermanent teachers, while permanent teachers are formally observed biannually. Teaching effectiveness criteria identified are: good planning; an appropriate classroom climate; enthusiastic, task-oriented teaching demonstrating variety and clarity; classroom management providing high levels of student involvement and time on task; positive interpersonal relations; and the exercise of professional responsibilities. Cited as a primary strength of the plan is that it is nonthreatening to teachers, who welcome the opportunity for instructional interaction and help from supervisors. The focus on formative improvement reduces staff friction and strengthens summative supervision as well. (MJL)

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INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH GOOD TEACHER EVALUATION

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By A. Dean Speicher
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Public education is under careful scrutinty by many groups, from parents who are concerned about Johnny's inability to read to our nation's political representatives who see a need to cut education funding. In light of these concerns and interests, today's public educators are increasingly asked to respond to probing questions about public education, its intent and practices. As interest in public education continues to grow, and as a member of the education profession, we are asked to respond to questions about the philosophical and research basis for effective teaching, student learning and staff development.

If we adopt the attitude that we can increase the chance that students will learn, that the teaching act can be refined and that we are a people-building profession, then we can have a positive effect on student learning and teacher effectiveness. The Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation (a local school district in Indiana) has developed a plan which uses proven research findings and allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to mutually share and develop a common knowledge and understanding of what constitutes effective instructional delivery systems.

Helping teachers to be more effective is what the supervision process must achieve. As educators we must design programs which improve the quality of instruction along with facilitating and recognizing the growth and development of teachers and supervisors. Currently educators share a growing concern about how to motivate teachers and supervisors to continue learning

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and improving. The following program of teacher evaluation is, in our opinion, sufficiently generic in nature for others to adapt any of its components for purposes of instructional improvement and student learning.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation has been committed to assisting teachers and administrators in instructional improvement since the early 60's. As a result, a Board policy regarding teacher evaluation is in operation. The plan outlined in this article was cooperatively developed by teaching and supervisory staff. The Superintendent of Schools provided major leadership and direction for the third generation plan. The 1964 first generation appraisal plan addressed and identified the personality traits of teachers. Instructional contribution to the organization was not necessarily addressed. In 1973 the second generation appraisal plan was developed and had as its focus the performance of the individual as a professional. Certain professional and behavorial criteria were identified and evaluated. The third and present appraisal plan began development in 1978 with implementation in 1981. The third generation plan has as its focus instructional improvement and is based upon teacher effectiveness research and effective supervisory procedures and practices.

THE EVALUATION PLAN

One of the most critical elements in the development of the teacher evaluation plan was the establishment by the Board of School Trustees of a Board policy related to teacher evaluation. The policy simply states that all employees shall be evaluated annually by their immediate supervisor and that an evaluation plan shall be established which directly relates to the written position description for each employee or job classification. The purpose is to be a bilateral plan with a focus on improving the quality of instruction, education and auxiliary services. The policy further directs that the Superintendent shall supervise the development of the administrative procedures for personnel evaluation in implementing this policy.

The component parts of the evaluation plan are:

I. Implementation

Following Board policy, the teaching and administrative staff of the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation worked together from 1978 to 1981 to develop a program for teacher evaluation. The committee consisted of teachers and principals from all organizational levels as well as key central office staff members. Throughout the development process different professionals representing a national spectrum of expertise were brought to the school district to work with the committee and total management team.

In August, 1981 the implementation plan began with an awareness workshop for the management team presented by the planning committee. In September, 1981 the committee conducted two teacher awareness workshops, one for secondary teachers and one for elementary teachers. In October, 1981 Dr. Thomas McGreal from the University of Illinois, Urbana, came to the district to discuss the program and its relationship to current teacher effectiveness research, student learning and how the program fits and compares with other evaluation plans across the nation. The program was then immediately put into operation according to established timelines. During the first months of implementation, the committee, with the assistance of Dr. Harriet Talmage of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, established a four-year plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation plan.

II. Philosophy and Purpose

The evaluation plan has as its philosophy and primary focus the delivery system of instruction with the teacher and supervisor working collaboratively to increase teaching effectiveness and enhance the opportunities for student learning through a formative process of instructional improvement.

III. Goal Setting

The first major component of the program involves goal setting. By October 15 of each year every teacher must have a goal-setting conference with his/her supervisor to develop a self-improvement plan. The plan establishes a minimum of one to a maximum of three instructional goals. The individual and supervisor cooperatively select and set one goal that relates to the area of planning, classroom climate, the teaching act or classroom management. Additional goals may be established in these areas or in other areas of the teacher effectiveness criteria which include interpersonal relations and member of the profession. Goals may be altered or new goals established through mutual agreement of the supervisor and teacher throughout the school year.

IV. Data Collection

The State of Indiana certifies two types of teachers -- non-permanent/semi-permanent and permanent teachers. Non-permanent/semi-permanent teachers will use all forms of data collection while permanent teachers are formally observed three times every other year. In the off year, permanent teachers use two of the four measures of data collection. Data collection techniques provide measures for determining teacher effectiveness and are:

A. Formal Observation - Formal observation is required of all non-permanent and semi-permanent teachers and requires that a pre-conference be held prior to each formal observation. A post-conference takes place following the formal observation. All conference times are agreed to mutually by the supervisor and the teacher. A minimum of three formal observations is required of all non-permanent/semi-permanent teachers and those permanent teachers using formal observation as a data collection technique. The primary purpose of formal observation is to monitor the teacher effectiveness criteria.

B. Informal Observation - Informal observation data may be collected by the supervisor at any time and reviewed with the teacher. The primary purpose of informal observation is to provide data to the teacher which can be helpful in the instructional improvement process.

C. Student Evaluation - Student evaluation is optional for permanent teachers and required of non-permanent/semi-permanent teachers. The information collected through the student evaluation process is to be shared between the teacher and supervisor, and is included as part of the teacher's annual appraisal report only by mutual agreement of the teacher and supervisor. Great insight can be gained related to instructional effectiveness and effective classroom procedures by asking students for their reactions and perceptions to questions aimed at providing descriptive information about instruction in the classroom. The purpose of collecting student evaluation data is to obtain descriptive data about the instructional process and not to rate the teacher.

D. Artifact Collection - Artifact collection includes items that the teacher uses in instruction, such as tests, quizzes, lesson plans, worksheets, etc. The teacher effectiveness criteria will serve as a basis for determining the quality and appropriateness of instructional artifacts.

V. Evaluation Schedule

Data collection occurs from October 15 to May 15 annually. Prior to May 15 every teacher will meet with his/her supervisor to complete an Annual Appraisal Report. The purpose of this report is to review the year's progress towards goal achievement for the teacher and supervisor and to tentatively establish direction for the coming school year.

VI. Teacher Effectiveness Criteria

Goals established are based on research based teacher effectiveness cri-

teria. These criteria were developed with the help of outside professionals. A snythesis of the teaching effectiveness research provides the basis for the teaching effectiveness criteria. The teaching criteria identified in our plan are:

A. Planning - Planning is an essential element related to student achievement. Good planning includes written lesson plans, lesson plans which relate to a specified curriculum, units which are of two to nine weeks duration and include goals and objectives which address student needs and a sequential step-by-step instructional lesson design.

B. Classroom Climate - Effective classroom climate requires that the professional take charge and set the climate, tone or atmosphere. Research indicates that the most effective classroom is a teacher-centered structured setting. Some indications of desirable classroom climate are seen in teacher behavior that reduces threats of criticism, increases opportunities for correct answers, develops questions which facilitate correct responses and provides additional time for appropriate responses. A classroom atmosphere should be such that teachers feel free to be a part of the class and believe that they can experience success in learning. An effective teacher who wants to set a climate where students feel that they can learn encourages volunteering, accepts and uses student responses, strives to increase the number of correct answers given by students and probes incorrect responses until a correct response is achieved.

C. Teaching Act - The act of teaching is the most critical element related to increasing student achievement and most directly influences student learning. An emphasis is placed on increasing active student engagement time. Two instructional approaches -- mastery learning and direct instruction -- have been found to be associated with high levels of engaged time. Both approaches require specific instructional objectives that are communicated

directly to students, sufficient time for learning units, formative tests, control of the teaching act by the teacher, the use of corrective teaching techniques and close monitoring by the teacher of student performance with immediate and specific academically-oriented feedback to the learner. Teachers who exhibit enthusiasm, are task-oriented and demonstrate variety and clarity in their instructional presentations are known to be more effective in increasing student achievement.

D. Classroom Management - Effective classroom management requires that teachers act in a manner which produces a high degree of student engagement, increases student involvement in classroom activities, reduces student behaviors that interfere with learning activities and produce efficient use of the total instructional time. Effective classroom management skills are demonstrated when teachers show visible leadership, provide and plan for maxiumum student time on task, bell-to-bell planning, limit student off-task behaviors, are businesslike and task-oriented and closely monitor the class while providing and using appropriate forms of reinforcement.

E. Interpersonal Relations - Effectiveness of teachers is influenced by how the certified staff interacts with other school personnel, students and parents. Teaching effectiveness is increased when interpersonal relationships are conducted in a pro-active positive manner and when teachers reflect their respect for students as individuals, maintain a positive attitude, are accessible to report and discuss pupil progress and exhibit a positive work attitude.

F. Member of the Profession - Teachers, as professionals, are linked to organizations both in and out of school. Effective teachers recognize their responsibilities to the school district, other school personnel, the community, students and the profession in general.

PLAN SUMMARY

The Penn-Harris-Madison Teacher Evaluation Plan is built upon the belief that teachers and administrators can work together to increase the effectiveness of instruction that is delivered within the educational setting. The plan further purports that the process is enhanced and becomes more effective when the evaluation is formative, non-threatening, is not summative in nature and provides a common language and understanding for the development of an instructional improvement program. The plan was developed by all parties involved in the evaluation process. It has been put in the form of a written document which increases the commitment of all involved and has been adopted by the Board of School Trustees with the support of all levels and segments of the instructional and administrative staff. At the end of the first year of the four year evaluation plan, results indicated that the two strong points of the first year of implementation were that the program is non-threatening to staff and that the staff welcomes the opportunity for instructionally-oriented interaction and help from their supervisor.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS

The formative nature of the plan supports the belief that people are interested in actions which directly affect them and are willing to change if shown the rationale why they should change. The plan focus on formative instructional improvement reduces interstaff friction and enhances the strength of the summative supervisory process as well as the formative plan. Both the formative and summative processes must be used separately at all times. A person cannot be on the summative and formative process at the same time.

In using a collegial supervision model the supervisee and supervisor work together for their mutual professional growth and development. As teachers move through the goal-setting process, teachers and administrators have an opportunity to investigate the most current research on instruction and

student learning. Through this process the effectiveness of the teacher increases and the perceptions of the principal as instructional leader of the school is enhanced. Administrators and teachers in the organization are expected to continually learn and refine their instructional skills.

Change is not always an easily accomplished task. Some individuals initially adopted a "wait and see" attitude. However, continued opportunity for professional improvement has eliminated all but the most hardcore skeptics. In-service for all principals and teachers is extremely important if the program is to succeed. This requires that strong support be visible both verbally and monetarily from the Board, superintendent, administrators and teaching staff. Fortunately in our organization, we enjoy the solid support of all groups. Hence, through continuing staff development activities supported by time and financial resources the program is moving forward and accomplishing its purposes.

SUMMARY

The Penn-Harris-Madison evaluation plan uses a positive approach to stimulating self-improvement, as well as creating a continuing focus on the improvement of instruction. The intent of the plan is to promote self-growth, instructional effectiveness and improvement in overall job performance. The basic function of the process is the shared responsibility of the teacher and supervisor, and is formative and bilateral in nature. The purpose of the plan is to focus on the delivery system of instruction with the teacher and supervisor working together to increase teaching effectiveness and student learning. School improvement can become a reality with the careful implementation of such a plan that ties individual growth and development to the evaluation process. Finally, the parties involved, Board, administrators and teachers, must be willing to change, assess the program and to alter and refine the process to promote its purposes while maintaining its basic intent.

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